
Title: Trial of N. Freemech

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Upstairs in the Mayor's office, Velika made final preparations for the trial. A constant stream of chilled air blast up the stairs from below, alerting Velika to the arrival of a number of spectators. The trial of the Dark General appeared to be gathering quite a crowd and the Magistrate wondered idly how many of them would be elves. Smiling sadistically to herself as she descended into the courtroom, Velika imagined the Dark General draining the souls of half the audience during the course of the trial.

As she crossed the room to her throne, Velika scanned the audience briefly. A frown flitted across her brow as she realized that not one of the half-frozen spectators was a Cainan citizen. Settling herself and flipping open a law text for some last minute preparation, she surreptitiously counted the number of pointed ears and thought that the General would be closer to killing the entire courtroom if her flights of fancy became reality. Velika bent her head and meditated on the laws before her, reassuring herself that she knew every letter and nuance of these

texts. She was not looking forward to this trial.

A restless noise moved among the spectators. The two parties involved in the dispute were nearly a quarter of an hour late, and the Magistrate still stared unblinkingly at her law texts. She looked up, shaking off her meditation, and noticed that while neither party had appeared, one of the General's men had entered the courtroom. At the very least, she thought to herself, Gray Hunter could stand in for the General.

The door opened one final time and Velika frowned at it, expecting to see Zaknafein or the General silhouetted against the snow. Her frown froze as she recognized the calm, kind eyes of the Sage of Honesty. Behind him stood the dark elf. Velika sighed quietly to herself as GreyPawn and Zaknafein took their seats to her right. She beckoned for Gray Hunter to approach her and spoke briefly to him. He agreed to represent his General's interests in this case and sat on Velika's left.

Velika opened the session of court with a brief description of the new procedures she had drafted. She then glared angrily at both the defense and the plaintiff.

“As both parties to this trial have caused the court to await them for an inordinately long time,

both will be fined. Gray Hunter, inform your general that he will be fined five thousand gold for his failure to appear for this trial. Zaknafein, you will be fined two thousand gold for holding up these proceedings with your absence.”

Both parties nodded and murmured that her wishes would be fulfilled in this matter.

Turning to GreyPawn she asked, “I presume you will be counsel for the plaintiff?”

“No, Magistrate, Zaknafein will speak for himself, I am merely here for consultation.”

Apparently relieved, Velika turned to Zaknafein and ordered him to present his case. She obviously struggled with his accent, trying to piece together his testimony despite her own imperfect knowledge of Sosarian. Zaknafein testified that the General had slain the elf named Loki in Caina to use his life force in an experiment. He announced that Navrip had broken the laws, illuminating in what way and how many times. Velika frowned.

“It is the duty of the court to determine which, if any, laws were broken. Please report the facts of the events.”

Zaknafein continued his tirade against the General, ending with an address to the spectators in his heavily accented Sosarian.

“I ask you, what crime did Loki commit, but to be an elf? Is that now a crime?”

Velika scowled. A murmur rippled through the elves in the audience as they were affected by his impassioned plea.

“M’lord Zaknafein, you will address your comments to the court, not the audience. You have finished your testimony,” she snapped curtly and turned to Gray Hunter. “You may now present your case.”

“Magistrate, I object! The accused is not present for his own defense,” GreyPawn declared as Gray Hunter opened his mouth to speak.

Velika favored him with an icy stare.

“As I have told you before, m’lord, I do not need the presence of the accused in order to perform the trial.”

She turned again towards Gray Hunter and smiled, silently commanding him to begin.

“Zaknafein accuses General Navrip of murdering Loki here in Caina. He says that it was for the General’s experiments. This is all true. Under the General’s orders, I also aided him in the murder of Loki.”

An angry murmur rippled through the courtroom again. Velika silenced it with a frosty gaze.

“The General must perform these experiments in order to survive. He uses their life force in his experiments, which is the only way that he can live. It is well known that he must slay elves, and will do so on sight.”

Gray Hunter bowed his head to Velika, finishing his testimony.

“Very well,” she replied, turning to the plaintiff again. “Have you a witness to call?”

“Magistrate,” Zaknafein began as Velika once again strained to understand him. “I should have liked to have called Gray Hunter to the stand, but he has already admitted his own guilt in aiding the General. However, I should like to ask him a few questions.”

“Very well,” Velika replied. “You may ask your questions.”

The dark elf looked at Gray Hunter with disgust. “Why? Why did you do it?”

Both Velika and Gray Hunter looked confused at this question. Gray Hunter had already testified that Navrip required the life essence of elves for his continued survival. GreyPawn recognized their confusion and explained.

“I believe my client is asking why Gray Hunter helped the General, as we already know Navrip’s motives.”

Understanding crossed the faces of the defense and the Magistrate and was then quickly replaced with confusion again. Velika wondered at the question. Was not the answer obvious?

“I was ordered to do so by my General. I follow orders,” Gray Hunter replied tersely. Velika nodded in agreement and turned again to Zaknafein.

“And if your General ordered that you die, or that you kill your love for his experiments, would you?” Smug satisfaction radiated from Zaknafein as Gray Hunter’s eyes flashed. He had successfully hit the nerve that he intended to find. Velika recognized the ploy and silenced Gray’s response.

“On behalf of the defense, I object to this line of questioning as irrelevant and rhetorical,” she said while turning to Gray Hunter. “Do not answer this question.”

“Magistrate,” GreyPawn interjected. “This is not irrelevant, it establishes motive.”

“Over ruled. M’lord Zaknafein, if you are finished with your questions,” Velika hesitated long enough to see the nod from the drow. “Very well. M’lord Gray Hunter, have you any witnesses to call?”

“Nay, Magistrate, I have none.”

Velika nodded and

considered what she had heard briefly before speaking.

“General Navrip has been accused of the murder of Loki on Cainan soil. As Gray Hunter has testified, his need for elven life force is common knowledge...”

“Magistrate, I object!” GreyPawn insisted. Velika coolly ignored the objection and continued.

“However, it was not at the time of the murder. I therefore find General Navrip Freemech guilty of the unprovoked murder of the elf Loki.”

“I withdraw my objection, Magistrate.”

Velika smiled inwardly as she continued, “For this murder, I fine the General five thousand gold. Gray Hunter, please inform your General. As Zaknafein has brought this crime to this court, it is now a matter of public record that he needs to kill elves on sight, this court will not entertain any further charges against the General for the slaying of elves. Elves are, from this point forward, considered provocation to the General. This case and this court are now closed.”

Velika nearly shouted her final comments over the strenuous objections of the Sage of Honesty and the indignant exclamations of the audience. She quickly exited the room and found some small solace in the relative

quiet of her office
upstairs. Taking pen to
hand, she began recording
the court findings.